

Luke Chapter 19 v 1 - 10

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[0 : 0 0] please be seated let's continue with our joy and thanksgiving as we pray together let us pray lord what a wonderful truth it is that jesus christ the son of god was born in bethlehem born into this world born into the human race the creator of everything became the created the one who has no limits the infinite god contracted to a span as the carol goes became man oh lord how we are amazed again at your great love to us oh god that you were willing to send your son to us to rescue to save and to deliver us we thank you again oh lord for the opportunity that christmas brings to focus our minds again on the coming of god to man we thank you oh lord that it means that you are the god who is interested in this world you are the god who is involved you are the god who is not standing aloof standing watching over helpless but you're the god whose sleeves are rolled up you're the god who gets into the muck and the mire of our broken society we thank you lord jesus that you came you came in that weak child yet at the same time you were still the god who upheld the universe you came oh lord to be born of mary yet oh lord you are the one who has no beginning and no end you came especially that you might suffer and die in our place you the one who is full of life yet you took on and tasted death for us lord we cannot separate easter from christmas and christmas from easter we cannot take away the reality of what we know that you were born to die born to bear our sin but born to rise again and to conquer sin and death for all those that you love we thank you oh lord that this morning we are those that you loved each one who has put our faith in you know that you love us with an unchanging love you love us lord with a love which is in spite of what we do how we behave how we speak how we think how we treat one another and how we treat you oh lord we thank you that you did not wait for us to be good enough to come and visit us you did not wait for us to sort ourselves out and get our house in order for lord we could never do that we would forever lord continue in the in the mess of our own making and of our own sin it was you who came to put things right to restore what was broken to heal that which was damaged to bring life to those that were dead and we praise you and thank you lord for this christmas we pray that as we worship you even this morning as we sing your praises as we think about why you came we pray that our hearts may be lifted up with that realization of fresh that it was for us that it was for me and lord especially if we haven't yet known the power and the wonder and the joy of christmas we pray again that this morning something of that wonder that god became man that the glory of god is seen and can be seen and known may hit us right between the eyes that we may know for ourselves that jesus is our savior and king so lord help us forgive us our many sins come by your spirit upon us we pray work in this time and grant us your blessing for we ask it all in the name of jesus christ the son of god

amen well uh richard uh thank you he's going to come and uh take a spot for a moment now i'm going to speak to the young people and then i've persuaded him to stay here and give us a notice afterwards but over to you richard let's uh turn together now in our bibles thank you richard uh for that very helpful little talk and for the notices too and uh we're going to read from luke and chapter 19 luke and chapter 19 uh the first 10 verses the first 10 verses of luke 19 page 1053 if you've got the church bible page 1053 so luke 19 verse 1 jesus entered jericho and was passing through a man was there by the name of zacchaeus he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy he wanted to see who jesus was but because he was short he could not see over the crowd so he ran ahead climbed a sycamore fig tree to see him since jesus was coming that way when jesus reached the spot he looked up and said to him zacchaeus come down immediately i must stay at your house today so he came down at once and welcomed him gladly all the people saw this began to mutter he's gone to be the guest of a sinner but zacchaeus stood up said to the lord look lord here and now i give half of my possessions to the poor if i've cheated anybody out of anything i'll pay back four times the amount jesus said to him today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a son of abraham for the son of man came to seek and to save the lost yeah please uh turn back to luke in chapter 19 and that's page 1053 if you've got the church bible luke 19 well some of you are here this morning because you're visiting uh family and visiting friends and for most of us that will be part of the course possibly already you've been uh down to other parts the country already and done your christmas visiting and taken your presents and exchanged them and so on and as we see even this morning folk will be coming and visiting you and when you're expecting somebody coming in the next day or two even later today to visit you friends and relatives uh and so on over the next several days and all these people who come to visit us and all the people that we go to visit have something in common uh they have a connection there's something that links every single one of the people we visit and the people who visit us and it's simply this we know them and they know us there's a relationship there we know them personally uh to belong to that elite group of people who we visit and who visit us uh they are friends and family and acquaintances not one of them is a stranger we don't expect anybody just to come knocking on our door and us who's a stranger and say well i've just come to stay for christmas for a few days i'm sure you won't mind no we don't know them it's a relationship which is at the core of all our visiting at christmas now over these past several sunday mornings in advent we've been thinking about why the son of god visited our home in earth why he came as the person we know as jesus christ whose birth we remember at christmas

and to answer that question we've been looking at episodes in the life of Jesus which we wouldn't immediately think of as speaking about his coming or about Christmas but they've reflected certain truths concerning the entrance the visitation as it were of the son of God and the mission which brought him from heaven into our world and for that reason I want us to consider the visit of Jesus to the home of Zacchaeus which is here in chapter 19 of Luke let's just set the scene for a moment Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem for the very last time we know that because just earlier in chapter 18 we're told in verse 31 Jesus took the 12 aside and told them we're going up to Jerusalem and everything everything that is written by the prophets about the son of God will be fulfilled he'll be handed over to the Gentiles they'll mock him insult him spit on him flog him and kill him so Jesus is on his way in fact he's on his way and he's passing through Jericho he's on his way to see the fulfillment of the mission for which he was born into this world his death and his suffering are looming large in his thinking and in his heart and yet on his way to this great culmination on this way to this fulfillment of his life's work he's still engaged in the great commission the reason he was sent into this world he's not diverted by his thoughts about his imminent death he's not diverted from that one purpose for which he was born he still is bringing into the lives of those he meets that one great gift of salvation there it is in verse 9 Jesus said to him today salvation has come to this heart to this house as he passes through Jericho on the road to Jerusalem he's still doing the things he was doing all the way through his ministry he's still healing the sick we see that there the blind beggar at the gate of Jericho at the end of chapter 18 he's still teaching and preaching the kingdom of God we see that in verse 11 and following of chapter 19 where he gives the parable of the king who went away and returned but most importantly the reason that he's in Jericho the reason that he's passing through that city on that one last stop as it were before he reaches Jerusalem and enters on the donkey on the day we call Palm Sunday he's there for one person for one reason that he might meet with and bring salvation to Zacchaeus he's about to go on to death row the last week before his death but before he begins that final journey there's one man that he must bring salvation to and we see the scene don't we we're told there in the first two verses as Jesus is entering Jericho there's a great clamoring of people aren't they hundreds of them there all pressing in or wanting some of his attention some of his time perhaps they want his healing we don't know but they're all there and there's Zacchaeus he's heard about this Jesus he's heard about the miracles he's done he's heard about the sort of man he is and Zacchaeus wants to see this Jesus too he doesn't want to be left out of seeing Jesus this celebrity miracle worker and healer but there's a problem to put it in politically correct language he was vertically challenged and so he couldn't see over the top of all the people so what does he do he climbs a tree a sycamore fig tree so that he might see Jesus and he gets a view and as Jesus is passing by

he stops all the people are there clanging and crowding in pushing their way in zacchaeus is in the tree perhaps there's other people on walls we don't know looking in maybe another in the tree as well they're all trying to see jesus they all want to to have a glimpse this amazing man jesus stops he stops for no one apart from zacchaeus verse five when he jesus reached the spot the spot where the tree was the spot where zacchaeus was was gazing down on jesus he looks up and he says zacchaeus come down immediately i must stay at your house today he calls him by name the very first thing that this event teaches us about the lord jesus the first thing that it makes us aware of us aware of is this that jesus came to save those he foreknew those he foreknew the apostle peter describes the believers to whom he's writing in his first letter as those who have been chosen according to the full knowledge of god before jesus came into the world before he was born of that baby in christmas he already knew the names of those that he was coming to save just as we thought earlier about the people that we visit our people that we know already so jesus came not as it were for the unknown but for those that he knew now of course we know god knows everybody god knows all of us whoever we are whatever our situation he knows every single person in the world completely all our thoughts all our emotions all our sorrows tears and sins yet in the matter of salvation he knew those that he would save even before he was born to mary it's a special knowledge a foreknowledge and it's a wonderful truth that runs throughout the bible it speaks of god's plan speaks of god's choice it speaks of god acting upon his own decision and will paul writes the christians in romans chapter eight he says for those god foreknew he also predestined he planned he chose he determined to save if you're a christian that's something which is a wonderful comfort a wonderful assurance it's a foundation upon which we can stand in all the doubts and the fears of life here's what paul writes about it in 2 timothy he says god's solid foundation stands firm sealed with this inscription the lord knows who are his those who are his that's what we can stand in all the christians when jesus christ was born into this world at christmas when he was born to mary in that stable in bethlehem he came to save you now we love to proclaim the gospel we love to declare the wonderful message of john 3 16 for god so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that's the gospel message that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life that's what we preach and proclaim but for the christian there's an inward truth which we delight in and it's this it's the same thing that paul delighted in that the son of god loved me and gave himself for me it's personal and until it becomes personal then becomes impersonal for the majority of people the coming of jesus into the world is an impersonal fact in history it's about as important to them as julius caesar crossing the tiber it's about as important to them as anything else in history napoleon defeated at waterloo it's just a historical event which has

some ramifications for the world in general but it doesn't make any difference to me but for the christian it does the son of god came into the world for me the son of god came and died for me if you're a christian this morning if you know that jesus is your savior this morning if you know that you're pardoned this morning because of jesus it's all because he came into the world with you in mind with you in mind how can you say that you're unimportant how can you say that you don't matter how can you say that god isn't interested or care about your life i'm starting to preach i'm starting to get hot do you rejoice in that does it fill your heart with thanksgiving zacchaeus by name he knew him beforehand and speaks to us of jesus coming into this world knowing us beforehand but what's especially wonderful as well as when we realize that jesus knew us and planned and came to save us what's so wonderful is that he came to do that for people like us to people who are offenders felons felons sinners look at what the people's reaction was to jesus singling out zacchaeus and saying he will come to his house and visit him all the people verse 7 saw this and began to mutter complain grumble he's gone to the house of a sinner a lawbreaker a felon an offender these people knew zacchaeus was not worthy of jesus's attention it wasn't just that he was a tax collector remember uh levi was a tax collector his other name is matthew and he became a disciple that was pretty bad awful he wasn't just an ordinary tax collector a run-of-the-mill nasty tax collector he was a chief tax collector the worst of the worst the lowest of the lowest the scum of the scum for a jew in jesus's day this person was really anathema accursed the last person that god could have any time for or any interest in zacchaeus admits that as well he acknowledges that they're quite right because his response to their calling him a sinner is this i've cheated he basically confesses to it doesn't he yes he gives away half to the poor but basically says look if i've cheated anybody which clearly i have and that's what's the problem with the tax collectors not only were they working for the romans the enemy of the land who had occupied the land but also they were people who used to skim it off the top they'd tax you a bit more than who had to give they really were bloodsuckers people judged him as being unworthy of jesus's attention jesus singled him out but they said he look he's a felon he's an offender he's a he's a crock he's a criminal he's a sinner all of us have a certain built-in judgmental attitude don't we all of us judge others according to our own standards of judgment as it were now we may try to deny that we may not try to judge others but we do we just can't help it in one sense we don't even have to know somebody all that well to judge them we can judge them just by their appearance just by the clothes they're wearing if they're wearing really smart clothes all the time think well he's up himself proud if they're wearing unfashionable clothes that's worse isn't it girls if they're wearing just designer label clothes

[20 : 14] well of course they've got more money than sense says the old people like me we judge people we judge people by the car they drive we judge people by the job that they do we judge people by the company that they keep we judge people when we hear a snippet of gossip about them we judge them solely on that little bit of dubious information we are judgmental people jesus says in matthew chapter 7 in the same way you judge others you will be judged the truth is the only judgment that actually matters in this world is not your judgment of me or mine of you or one another the only judgment that matters is god's judgment of us the people judge zakius as being unworthy undeserving of jesus's attention they were quite right but then what they thought of him is true of all of us here what god says this is god's judgment there is no one righteous not even one person there is no one who understands there is no one who seeks god all have turned away they have together become worthless there's no one who does good not even one person their throats are open graves their tongues practice deceit the poison of vipers is on their lips their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness their feet are swift to shed blood ruin and misery mark their ways and the way of peace they do not know there is no fear of god before their eyes that's everyone that's all of us not just sacchius the tax collector not just the drug dealer not just the person in prison not just the person who is the lowest of the lowest in our society the person that we judge or hate or dislike there's not one of us who deserves god's attention and yet here's the wonderful thing that god knew all about you for you you before you were born and before jesus came into the world he not only knew you by name but he knew all your sins and offenses and wickedness and yet still he came think about it for a moment think that uh uh just by way of an illustration you're going to go and visit some people and you're going to and you're going to take them a wonderful food hamper you're going to take them something which has cost you a great deal of money and you want to bring it to them as a token of of care and of love and concern imagine you go to that person's house knock on the door and you say i brought this for you and and and it's it's it's it's for you to enjoy and they pick it up and they throw it at us if you knew that they were going to do that beforehand would you have gone of course you wouldn't but jesus came into the world knowing that we would throw back in his face his love and care knowing that then and when we would take him and crucify him knowing that he would be put to death for our sake this just makes the foreknowledge of god the plan of god to save us all the amazing more amazing jesus knew zacchaeus was a cheating thieving offender yet he went to his home that day in jericho all the same zacchaeus knew he was undeserving the people of jericho knew he was undeserving but jesus still called on his called to his house to bring him salvation the apostle paul makes a wonderful statement in one timothy in chapter one he says this here is a trustworthy saying worthy of full acceptance jesus christ came into the world to save sinners and then he adds at the end of whom i'm the worst paul didn't judge other people say yes they're all terrible sinners but actually i can understand why god should have a concern for me i can understand why jesus should come to rescue and save me because i'm

really quite a nice person i'm not really that bad as that person over there or that person down my street or that person in my family no he said it's a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance jesus christ came into the world to save sinners and i'm the worst if that's what you believe if that's what you know is true of yourself then you're one of those that jesus came to save see christmas is for sinners just like church is for sinners god is for sinners those who know themselves to be the worst of sinners who know themselves totally undeserving of jesus attention and love and care some people are trapped into thinking lie to into thinking i'm just too wicked for god to care for me i'm just too bad when i look into my own heart and i see the sin there i see the failure there i see the mistakes i've made i see the way that i react to people there's no way that i can possibly deserve this this love of god and this forgiveness i god will turn me away he'll slam the door in my face no he won't there are no sins that are too many for him to forgive there are no sins too many that he will turn you away there is no blackness of heart too black that he is not willing to save in fact the opposite is true you see the people of jericho they looked upon or rather looked down upon zacchaeus as being a sinner they believed that jesus was too good for him they believed that jesus shouldn't go to his house jesus should come to their house because after all they were law-abiding and good citizen good jews good people but jesus didn't go to their house he didn't stop outside the tree and speak to them he spoke to jesus only him and i would put it to you even this morning dear friends that jesus is here amongst us by his spirit and he stopped here if i can put that way and he's calling you he's calling you because he knows all about you and he knows what your sin is like and he knows what's deep down it's not having too much sin that forbids you from coming to jesus it's not having enough or not recognizing you have enough or not seeing that you have enough and finally here we see as well not only that jesus foreknew he came into this world with full knowledge of those that he would save not only comes to save those who are the offenders the felons the sinners but we see as well what is the great gift that he brings what is salvation what does it mean to be saved today salvation has come to this house well what does that mean for zacchaeus what does that mean for those who put their trust in him what does that mean it means to be found it means to be found that's what jesus says verse 10 for the son of man came to seek and to save the lost in other words this man was lost but now he's found jesus had several parables about that the sheep that was lost and the shepherd came and went to it and found it the woman who lost that precious coin part of her dowry for marriage and she swept the house until she found it the young man who ran away from his father spent everything he had became utterly lost was found when he returned to the gut to the father who loved him see zacchaeus had not only lost his way in life as it were being led and guided by greed and and and

possessions alone his life was not only a lost cause as far as he and the people were concerned in that he was living a meaningless pointless life simply for material things a life without happiness scorned and rejected by society but above all he had lost all hope of god's notice jesus says today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a son of abraham he had this amazing privilege to be born a son of abraham a descendant of abraham born as part of god's special people in the old testament with all the blessings that that brought of knowing god's law and knowing and the way into god and relationship with god but he'd squandered all those blessings he'd lost all those blessings by his sin he had become cut off from the god of his fathers he's now outside of god's covenant care forever destined to exist without god's mercy of salvation he was lost and he knew that he was lost and the people knew that he was lost and so are you so is every single person lost without god and as paul puts it without hope in this world it doesn't matter whether you're a jew or a gentile doesn't matter if you're a man or a woman or a boy or a girl or rich or poor it doesn't matter if you're good or bad in your own sight you're lost you're cut off we've gone our own way we've lived for those things which only rob us of god's presence and love we talk about those who drown as being lost at sea but the fate of those of us who are lost without christ is much much worse it's an eternal lostness it's a lostness in this world that means we continue to live but we're just existing we continue to walk day by day and breathe day by day but we have no idea where we're going we have no idea what life is about we just are lost and wandering through life we take we go wherever our sinful desires take us we go and follow our own wants and and the pressures and the wants of other people too here's how paul describes what it means to live without god the state that each and every one of us is in he says you speaking to christians you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient all of us also lived among them at one time gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature following its desires and thoughts like the rest we were by nature deserving god's wrath to be lost is to be in the place of ultimate danger to not only be far from god but under the very anger and justice and judgment of god remember the judgment that god has placed upon us how he looks and sees into every heart and says there's no one not one that's good not one that is acceptable not one that's done enough as they were to undo their sin and their selfishness god is just doesn't turn a blind eye doesn't say well it's not really that important it's only a white light doesn't matter no he is a god who is just but he's a god of mercy so immediately after we're told that like the rest we were by nature of wrath we're told but because of his great love for us god is rich in mercy and he goes on to describe what god has done for us in jesus he's made us alive we're found jesus came to seek and save the lost we may not realize we're lost we may not feel that we're lost but we are and god the son came into

this world this dark and sinful cruel world and he came with your name on his lips and he came and he suffered and he died to take away your sin and he came to find you and to restore you to a living relationship with the god who is your maker to put that which is right which is wrong to be found is to be saved and to be brought into the living loving enduring eternal love of god that's what christ christmas means to every christian here this morning to every christian around the world it means this today salvation has come to this house to this life what about you this christmas has jesus come for you he has are you going to turn him away you're going to continue blindly going your own way or will you like zacchaeus receive him gladly into your life let me urge you to do that do nothing else this christmas if you visit no one else if no one visits you then listen and hear christ has come to you with salvation let's pray together thank you jesus christ that you came into this world for us to rescue us to save us to find us it's not that you didn't know where we lived it isn't that you didn't know where we were it's not that we were lost in the sense that you had lost us but we had lost ourselves no compass no map no gps could ever find the way back to the god who made us and created us for himself we thank you that you came lord jesus came at great cost thank you that you came knowing us knowing us as felons and offenders and sinners knowing all the things that make us undeserving of your love and salvation but you came all the same you came especially to take away that sin and to bring us forgiveness to bring us life we pray that this christmas again oh lord we may rejoice and celebrate in the assurance and the knowledge that we are yours your children your people your precious possession and that lord we might rejoice in the assurance that you are ours our savior our lord our god oh lord we pray that again this christmas we may not lose sight of jesus but rather embrace and receive him as the greatest gift of god amen let's for i am convinced that neither death nor life neither angels nor demons neither the present nor the future nor any powers neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us us from the love of god that is in christ jesus our lord amen